

KENTUCKY

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, a powerful tornado stretched across 200 miles, never leaving the land, and perhaps the longest streak of tornado destruction we have ever seen in the United States of America. And my heart goes out to all those families who have been so impacted, all those who are lost, all those who are without a home, all those whose lives have been turned upside down.

We, the Senate, must act to be supportive of our fellow Americans who have faced such incredible destruction.

CHINA

Madam President, I come today to the floor to address another tragedy—a tragedy unfolding in China, where the Olympic Games are scheduled to begin on February 4.

I come to the floor to applaud President Biden for speaking out and announcing a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 February Beijing Olympic Games. This is absolutely the right thing to do, and as Beijing's response has shown, it sends a clear signal to the world that the world will not silently stand by as human rights are so dramatically abused.

For 2 weeks in February, the world will join together in the bask of the spectacle of the Winter Games. We will experience the highs and lows, as athletes from around the globe experience themselves the thrills of victory and the agony of defeat.

Athletes heading to the Games dream of thrilling the world and winning medals, but they also dream of contributing to the Olympic spirit, a spirit often spoken of in terms of working to build a better world through sports, which is why it is so offensive that these Games are set to take place in the shadow of some of the world's most egregious assaults on human rights and human dignity.

It is mind-boggling to me that the International Olympic Committee chose just this past March to characterize their strategic roadmap of the 5 years using such lofty goals as the Games will “contribute to more inclusive society and to peace,” and yet allowing the Games to go on in a nation where genocide is taking place at this very moment. It is mind-boggling because it is not some small abuse that is taking place but one of the worst the world has ever seen.

The Chinese Government has been committing, and is continuing to commit, genocide against a religious minority, and they are stripping away the political rights of Hong Kong's citizens, and they are suppressing the free-rights speeches of Chinese activists and advocates and journalists and bullying China's critics at home and abroad.

We cannot allow China to use the shine of the Olympic medals to blind the world to these facts. We have seen this before, and philosophers say that those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

So let's return to 1936, the Olympic Stadium, the Olympic flag flying

proudly not just in the stadium but throughout the city of Berlin for the summer Games right next to Nazi swastikas. It still shocks me to think of the world watching and cheering on as the Olympic torch was lit in a stadium filled with men and women giving the Nazi salute as Adolf Hitler watched on.

The Nazi regime had already started carrying out their racist, genocidal policies. They had already persecuted Jewish, German, and LGBTQ men and women, and labor activists and other minorities. They had already rounded up and jailed political opponents other nondesirables, including some 800 Roma in and around Berlin, who, just weeks before the start of the Games, were locked away in a camp outside the city.

But the world chose to look away from that unfolding horror. For 2 weeks during the Games, the Nazis took down their anti-Semitic signs, the propaganda ministry made newspapers ease up on hateful rhetoric, and the world praised the German government, legitimizing their regime with such fawning declarations as when the New York Times observed that the Games put Germany back in the fold of nations.

The world allowed itself to be beguiled by the Nazi facade. Behind that facade stood a violent, racist regime. Behind that facade was a government that controlled what the people living within its power could do and what they could say. Behind that facade was a regime that had no belief in anyone's basic human rights and that within 3 years was seeking to conquer the world while simultaneously murdering 6 million Jewish individuals and millions of other non-Jewish men, women, and children.

What if, instead of being taken in by the spectacle of the Games, and what if, instead of allowing the Nazis to use those Games for propaganda, the leaders of the world had stood up and pushed back? How much death and destruction might have been prevented? We will never know.

But what we do know is that we have the opportunity right now to learn from that past mistake and to do better.

Elie Wiesel once said: “There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.”

We cannot fail to protest the Chinese Government's actions that stain the mission and purpose of the Olympics Games, because there is absolutely no question about the kinds of crimes and atrocities that are being committed by the Chinese Government at this very moment—atrocities like the enslavement and genocide against the Uighur Muslim minority being carried out in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. That genocide has been documented, it has been recognized, and it has been publicly announced by two different Presidential administrations.

That genocide completely reflects the United Nations' official definition of “a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group in whole or in part.”

At the direction of President Xi of China, at least a million Uighurs are being detained and enslaved in camps in Xinjiang. They are forced to toil and work for the Chinese Government, producing cotton and other goods while undergoing reeducation programs where they are forced to renounce their faith and pledge loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party.

This is a process described in one official Chinese document as “washing brains, cleansing hearts, strengthening righteousness and eliminating evil.” It certainly is one of the most dramatic forms of evil taking place at this moment. That is what the Chinese Government is doing to the Uighur people.

The crimes against these individuals include torture, sleep deprivation, sexual abuse, rape, forced sterilizations, and abortions. One woman who fled the country after being released from a camp, who resides here now in the United States, recounted stories to reporters and human rights investigators of women being taken from their cells every night, brought to another room to be tortured and raped by one or more masked men. She, and another woman who was forced to help facilitate these assaults, have spoken about police officers paying good money to have their pick of the imprisoned women and girls. Those who are returned to their cells are threatened with even more pain and more torture if they say anything.

And these crimes and this repression aren't contained just to the camps. Millions in Xinjiang are subjected to Orwellian surveillance and discrimination, restricted from traveling or going to school, from freely speaking or freely worshipping. Meanwhile, the Chinese Government is systematically ripping children from their parents' arms, forcing them to live in state-run facilities where they are being indoctrinated to renounce their faith, ethnicity, and culture; to view their parents as China's enemies; and to praise the Communist Party.

All of that has been going on for years, at least since 2017, and all of it will still be going on as the International Olympic Committee and athletes from around the world gather in Beijing on February 4 for the opening ceremonies. And if the world is silent, if there are no protests or consequences, all that will serve simply to embolden the Chinese Government and their genocidal efforts.

Beijing's egregious actions don't stop with crimes against the Uighur people. We see those crimes in Hong Kong, where the Chinese Government is stripping the rights of Hongkongers, one day after another.

Back in 1998, China promised to adhere to the “one country, two systems” model. They signed a contract with